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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [UY](#)  
SUBJECT: URUGUAY, S ANTI-DRUG CHIEF RECOUNTS SUCCESSES,  
SEEKS FURTHER COOPERATION WITH USG

¶1. (U) This telegram is sensitive but unclassified, and not  
for Internet distribution.

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Summary  
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¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Baxter met August 6 with Deputy Chief of  
Staff of the Presidency and President of the  
Counter-narcotics commission Jorge Luis Vazquez to discuss  
options for advancing bilateral counter-narcotics  
cooperation. Vazquez detailed GOU successes in the fight  
against illegal drugs, described ongoing steps to strengthen  
the GOU's anti-drug capabilities, and expressed interest in  
deepened cooperation. Vazquez also confirmed his commitment  
to signing the outstanding letter of agreement in September,  
providing needed impetus to overcome the remaining issues in  
the next few weeks. End Summary.

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Serious about the Drug Problem  
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¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Baxter and DCM called on Uruguay's drug  
czar Jorge Vazquez to urge an expeditious signing of the  
pending bilateral Letter of Agreement (the "Assistance and  
Cooperation Agreement of 2008 for Narcotics Control and Abuse  
between the Government of the United States of America and  
the Government of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay") and to  
discuss other possibilities for anti-drug cooperation.  
Vazquez responded positively regarding the LOA, saying "We  
will get it done, with or without the lawyers." Poloffs are  
working closely with Vazquez's staff and will strive to clear  
the remaining bracketed text in the next several weeks.

¶4. (SBU) Vazquez gave the ambassador an overview of the GOU's  
anti-drug successes and how it is working to strengthen its  
hand in the fight against drug trafficking. Uruguay has put  
in place a new money laundering regime practically from  
scratch, and has been receiving good reviews from the  
Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering in South  
America (GAFISUD), according to Vazquez. Vazquez touted the  
GOU's record of over thirty successful prosecutions for money  
laundering since 2005, when the current administration  
assumed power. Prior to 2005, no one had been convicted for  
that crime.

¶5. (SBU) Vazquez also emphasized his efforts to strengthen  
the ability of the courts to prosecute these crimes. He said  
the GOU is developing two courts that are to be dedicated

specifically to cases of organized crime, with trained personnel and simplified procedures. Vazquez noted that several cases testing Uruguay's asset forfeiture regime, which mandates that all proceeds from seized assets be spent on anti-drug social programs and law enforcement, are in the home stretch of the legal process, and will likely result in the disbursement this year of around USD 5 million for counter-narcotics work.

¶6. (SBU) Interdiction efforts by the police have already made a big dent in traffickers' pocketbooks, according to Vazquez, who said that one case initiated in Uruguay had resulted in an approximate USD 100 million loss for an (unnamed) international drug cartel. Vazquez also said that the GOU plans to enhance port security via the purchase of two (2) container scanners in the coming year to augment the coverage provided by the one in place, and airport security via a process in development that will review one hundred percent of Montevideo's passengers, their baggage, and air cargo. A new radar system will help the GOU detect small planes coming into Uruguayan airspace.

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Vazquez's Approach  
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¶7. (SBU) Vazquez attributed Uruguay's anti-drug gains to the pragmatism of the current administration, which acknowledged mutual suspicion between the incoming, leftist government in 2005 and traditionally more conservative elements of law enforcement and the judiciary. The government worked hard to build bonds of trust, and now counts the police as an ally. Comment: The Embassy's law enforcement community has had a

particularly positive experience with Uruguay's dedicated anti-drug unit (Direccion General de Represion del Trafico Ilicito de Drogas) and its commander, Inspector Principal Julio Guarteche. End Comment. Vazquez added that another major factor in the GOU's success has been its understanding of the importance of developing social partnerships within the country and cooperative relationships with other countries, including the U.S. Vazquez admitted that a number of GOU entities struggle with corruption problems (he mentioned the customs service and coast guard), but claimed attacking such corruption is a GOU priority.

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Closer Cooperation with the U.S.  
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¶8. (SBU) Ambassador Baxter noted Vazquez's understanding of the importance of international cooperation in fighting drug trafficking, and told Vazquez that the Embassy's law enforcement team is working to identify the best tools to assist Uruguay. Vazquez said that he "completely agrees" with the need for expanded cooperation with the U.S., and asked for a follow-up meeting to discuss specific areas. We will likely hold such a meeting in early September, when Vazquez returns from international travel.

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Comment  
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¶9. (SBU) Vazquez is clearly proud of the gains that have occurred on his watch, especially those that he sees as strengthening institutional capacity and therefore potentially benefiting Uruguayan society for years to come (e.g., the courts dedicated to organized crime, his empowerment of Uruguay's counter-narcotics unit). He appears to take his responsibilities seriously, and recognizes that Uruguay has serious vulnerabilities and that international cooperation is the answer. End Comment.

Baxter